

Message Text

SECRET

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15

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 160556Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3170

S E C R E T THE HAGUE 1356

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, NL

SUBJECT: CENTURION TANKS

REF: THE HAGUE 843

1. ON MARCH 13 ISRAELI AMBASSADOR BAR-ON SOLICITED MY INTERVENTION IN OBTAINING US REQUEST TO GON FOR RELEASE OF 65-80 MARK I AND/OR MARK II CENTURION TANKS FOR EVENTUAL ACQUISITION BY ISRAEL.

2. BAR-ON SAID THAT HE HAD APPROACHED MOD VREDELING IN LATE OCTOBER OR EARLY NOVEMBER 1973 REGARDING ISRAELI ACQUISITION OF SEMI-MOTHBALLED CENTURIONS IN DUTCH INVENTORY TO WHICH US RETAINS TITLE. HE THOUGHT MOST WERE MARK I AND BELIEVED NUMBER WAS BETWEEN 65 AND 80. HE IS INTERESTED IN AS MANY TANKS AS CAN BE RELEASED AND SAID ISRAEL WOULD BE GLAD TO TAKE UP TO 200. BAR-ON INDICATED VREDELING FAVORED TRANSACTION BUT SAID HE COULD TAKE NO ACTION UNTIL SPECIFIC REQUEST RECEIVED FROM US. BAR-ON HAD SO ADVISED HIS GOVERNMENT AND PRESUMED THIS INFORMATION HAD BEEN COMMUNICATED TO US.

3. IN DECEMBER BAR-ON SAID VREDELING TOLD HIM NO REQUEST HAD AS YET BEEN RECEIVED FROM US AND HE HAD THEREFORE TAKEN NO ACTION. APPARENTLY BAR-ON HAS NOW RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS TO PROCEED IN THIS MATTER.

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(THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE BEEN APPROACHED

LOCALLY ON ISSUE.)

4. WITHOUT INDICATING THIS MATTER HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN DISCUSSED IN THE EMBASSY, I TOLD BAR-ON I WOULD RELAY HIS GOVERNMENT'S INTEREST TO WASHINGTON AND BE IN TOUCH WITH HIM IN DUE COURSE. I ADDED THAT TIMING OF HIS REQUEST SEEMED UNFORTUNATE IN VIEW OF THE PENDENCY OF THE TERMINATION OF THE OIL BOYCOTT. OBVIOUSLY NEITHER US NOR GON WOULD WISH TO MAKE ANY OVERT ANTI-ARAB GESTURES WHICH COULD JEOPARDIZE ELIMINATION OF BOYCOTT. ONE WOULD HAVE TO ASSUME THAT MERE DISCUSSION OF PROPOSITION WOULD BE LEAKED TO PRESS. I SAID IN MY JUDGMENT VREDELING WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO ACT ON THE MATTER HIMSELF WITHOUT DISCUSSION WITHIN COUNCIL OF MNISTERS, AT LEAST WITH PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER. THERE ARE INDIVIDUALS IN FOREIGN MINISTRY WHO WOULD BE CONCERNED OVER INITIATION OF ANTI-ARAB ACTIVITY BY GON. IT WOULD BE UNLIKELY THAT MATTER COULD BE KEPT FROM THEM AND, THEREFORE, IT WOULD EVENTUALLY SURFACE IN MEDIA WITH POSSIBLE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS FOR BOTH GON AND US.
GOULD

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NNN

Message Attributes

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